

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER OF DHRITHARASHTRA AGAINST THE THEORY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

GAYATHRI. N

Assistant Professor (Sr.), Department of English, SSL, VIT University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

### ABSTRACT

*The theory of Emotional Intelligence, that has gained immense popularity has equally thrown open, several questions that need to be addressed– one of it being, ‘is there a negative side to emotional intelligence’? This paper explores this possibility, by analyzing the ‘Ability Model’ of Emotional Intelligence, against the prominent character of the Indian epic, the Mahabharata – Dhritharashtra.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ability Model, Slaski & Cawright

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### INTRODUCTION

The theory of Emotional Intelligence, has proved to be a path breaking, significant concept that holds the potential to change the lives of people, as extensive, inexhaustible research, that brings out the significant role played by EI, in several facets of life – academics and psychological well-being (Fine et. al. 2003, Durlak, et. al. 2011; Rivers et. al. 2012), leadership (Walter, et. al. 2011; Cote, et. al. 2010; Boyatzis, et. al. 2012), organizational behavior (Slaski and Cawright, 2003; Groves, et. al. 2008; Kirk, et. al. 2011), social behavior (Nelis, et. al. 2011), stress management (Styhre et al., 2002), and above all, the general well being and positive approach to life (Bar-On 2010), it promises. That EI, is a theory which has touched and changed the way on various fields, including psychology, psychiatry, medicine, sports, business, education are perceived, in an irrefutable fact (Picard, Vyzas & Healey, 2001; Mayer et al., 2008; Arora et al., 2010; Crombie, Lombard & Noakes, 2009, 2011; Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2010; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Martins, Ramalho & Morin, 2010; Song et al., 2010; O’Boyle, Humphrey, Polack, Hawver, & Story, 2011; Kumar & Sharma, 2012;). As Emotional Intelligence proves itself in having the potential, to bring in a remarkable change in the lives of individuals, it also assumes the responsibility of coming closer to the common man.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

As a young, fledgling theory of just twenty years of age, EI has a long way to go before it perfects itself, resolving the questions and challenges, facing it. Emotional Intelligence, is a concept which has the potential to touch and change the lives of every human being. It is not a theory, which confines itself to the portals of academic and intellectual pursuits. The immense popularity of the theory is a reflection of how well, people from all walks of life – be it corporate, academic or general public– have recognized the role of emotions, in their life. As a theory with such immense potential, it becomes the prerogative of the researchers, to present it in such a way that, even an uneducated common man benefit from it.

This study in particular, focuses on bringing the theory of emotional intelligence, closer to the common man. Further, it also identifies that, the cross-cultural aspect of emotions has not been given much concentration, by the theoretical models of emotional intelligence. Also, the theorists have so far paid attention, only to the positive effects of emotional intelligence (Farrelly et. al., 2007). EI is like any other intelligence and there is a fair chance of misusing or using it, for personal and selfish ends. Combining all these aspects, to make the theory comprehensible to even the common man, to study the theory from a different cultural background and to ascertain whether emotional intelligence can be used negatively, is the objective of this paper.

This paper, thus studies the character of Dhritharashtra, from the great Indian epic ‘The Mahabharata’, against the ability model of Mayer and Salovey, to understand the ramifications of this theory in real life situations. Ganguli’s translation of ‘The Mahabharata’ is used for this research, and the footnotes pertain to this book in translation.

Dhritharashtra is the son of Ambika, the eldest prince of Kuru Dynasty. But, unfortunately he is forced to relinquish the throne to his younger brother Pandu, owing to his physical handicap. He was born blind, and in spite of his exemplary administrative skills, remains a caretaker ruler in the place of Pandu, when Pandu leaves to the forest to atone his sin of killing a sage, that he was being refused his rightful claim to the throne, is ever simmering in his mind which perhaps explains his unconditional support, to Duryodhana in coveting the throne from the Pandavas. Dhritharashtra’s character is a finely chiseled one, as he represents the human infirmity of wanting to be righteous and good, and yet irresistibly pulled towards personal accomplishments, through repugnant means. Till the end, he remains rooted in this dilemma, of being just and giving in the desire of retaining the throne for himself. But, he was capable of selfless righteousness and this is brought forward, through a couple of instances.

There are a few instances, where one witness’ Dhritharashtra’s righteousness. The first one is after the princes – the Kauravas and the Pandavas – had completed their formal education, and Dhritharashtra crowns Yudhishtira, as the heir apparent. One does not see any ulterior motive, or half-heartedness in this action. It is, on his own accord, that he takes this decision. The second instance is, when he advises Duryodhana against coveting the wealth of Yudhishtira. When Duryodhana is consumed with jealousy, at the prosperity of the Pandavas in Indraprastha and plots against them, Dhritharashtra tries to reason out that, Duryodhana’s jealousy was baseless and if they remained united and friendly with the Pandavas, the entire world would be under their control. He also points out that, Duryodhana’s wealth and power were no less than the Pandavas. He advises Duryodhana, “The sons of Pandu are as thy arms. Do not lop off those arms of thine. Plunge not into internal dissensions for the sake of that, wealth of thy brothers.”<sup>1</sup> This advice is also genuine, as he acknowledges and appreciates the Pandavas’ righteousness. But sadly, these good thoughts do not stay long enough, to bear fruit as he is almost immediately swayed, by the arguments of Duryodhana. His love for his son always overpowered his sense of righteousness. If Duryodhana is defined by his jealousy, for the Pandavas, Dhritharashtra is defined by his blinding love, for his son Duryodhana.

Apart from the above mentioned instances, Dhritharashtra’s genuine concern for the Pandavas is revealed, towards the end of the Kurukshetra war. Duryodhana is crushed in defeat by Bhima, and the Pandavas emerge victorious. But, the defiant Duryodhana even at his death bed is not willing to let go of his enmity towards Pandavas and anoints Drona’s son Aswatthama, as the lieutenant of his army. His army, which was reduced to just three persons – Kripacharya,

Krithavarma and Aswatthama – under the direction of Aswatthama, decides to attack the Pandavas in the night, when they are asleep. Krishna senses the imminent danger to the Pandavas and expresses his concern, as he is conversing with Dhritharashtra. Rising abruptly, he cuts short his conversation, addressing Dhritharashtra, “The son of Drona bears an evil intention. It is for this that I rise so suddenly! It seems that, he has formed a plan of destroying the Pandavas, during the night!”<sup>2</sup> Dhritharashtra, sensing the danger pleads with Krishna, to protect the Pandavas – “Go, quickly, O! Mighty-armed one, protect the Pandavas!”<sup>3</sup> There is genuine concern for the Pandavas, as he prays for their well-being. What needs to be remembered is that, this comes at the juncture of his own son Duryodhana’s defeat, and death at the hands of the Pandavas. Even after losing all his hundred sons, he does not bear any ill-will against Yudhishtira, as he is aware that, he himself was the reason of this carnage. His inability to control Duryodhana and steer him towards peace, was the root cause of the suffering. Neither does he try to hide this fact, as he openly acknowledges and repents his blinding love, for Duryodhana.

Dhritharashtra’s emotional struggle takes on a different dimension, as it is studied with this characteristic sense of justice and affection, he had towards the Pandavas. Unlike Duryodhana, who is consumed by an everlasting hatred and jealousy towards the Pandavas, one finds Dhritharashtra as a person, who was aware of his weakness and its consequences, yet struggled to tread the path of righteousness.

### **A BRIEF CHARACTER SKETCH OF DHRITHARASHTRA**

Dhritharashtra is a refined version of Duryodhana. Duryodhana is like an adamant child, who cajoles everybody to get what he desires. Eventhough his actions are unpardonable, one cannot deny that, somewhere in the corner of the heart, one feels sad for him. It is a helpless pity that, one feels for him, as he plunges headlong without knowing where his actions would actually lead him to. In his own way, he felt justified about the way he dealt with the Pandavas. He believed that, he was treading the right path and that his actions were justified. But Dhritharashtra, on the other hand is fully aware of the consequences, of his actions. He is neither ignorant, nor is forced into what he does. He knew that, Duryodhana was charting his own destruction, in opposing the Pandavas, yet none of his attempts to convince Duryodhana, to end the enmity are sincere. It is superfluous and only to satisfy Vidura, and the rest of the elders. Deep down in his heart, he cherishes the thought that, Duryodhana would be successful in defeating the Pandavas. He uses Duryodhana, to satisfy his own desires. He tries to mask his feelings, behind a fake generous and upright personality. But, unfortunately his emotions are so strong that,, it betrays him every time. Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra are an irretrievable pair, yoked to destiny’s cart. Duryodhana’s plans would never have been possible, without Dhritharashtra’s support, and on the other hand Dhritharashtra lacked the conviction and courage of Duryodhana, to go for what he wished. One needed the other, to fulfill their wishes and remain a perfect foil, for each other. One without the other would have lacked direction or the courage to act. As Duryodhana himself quips, “Like a boat fastened to another, thou and I are tied to each other.”<sup>4</sup>

Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra, both strive for the same end. They wished to be the sovereign rulers of Hastinapura, denying the Pandavas their fair share of the kingdom. Though, both wish for the same fruit, and work together to achieve their goal. There are marked differences in their personalities. As mentioned earlier, Duryodhana is like

the spoilt child, who knows not what he is asking for, whereas, Dhritharashtra is a seasoned politician who deliberately moves his coins, to get the desired results. Duryodhana is open and never tries to hide his feelings, towards the Pandavas, whereas Dhritharashtra strives to make others believe that, he is a helpless onlooker of his son's evil designs. Though, it is an open secret, that he coveted the throne as much as Duryodhana, he tries to project a face that, is honest and upright. Duryodhana was surrounded by people, who encouraged him and supported him, in all his evil intentions, whereas, Dhritharashtra had a strong friend and a loyal minister in Vidura, who constantly warned him and strived hard, to keep him away from wickedness and malevolence. In spite of having people, who would give him good counsel, he voluntarily seeks the advice of Kanika, his minister who preaches him cold blooded politics, which shows no mercy and stops not till the last enemy is vanquished.<sup>5</sup> Dhritharashtra's, sinfulness is by choice rather than, by chance and thus becomes a greater and more evil a force, to reckon with than Duryodhana.

Dhritharashtra is a person, who is full of desire, yet, lacks conviction. He is a man, who wanted only the benefits and not the responsibility. He supports Duryodhana, as long as he sees victory on the other side. The minute things go wrong, he is the first person to admonish and blame Duryodhana, for indulging in such evil actions. When the Kauravas face an uphill task and struggle to fight the valiant Pandavas, in the Kurukshetra war, Dhritharashtra laments, "O Sanjaya, O son, that which has in battle befallen all my children assembled together, is certainly due to the evil acts of wicked Duryodhana, who followeth in the path of avarice, which is wicked of understanding, whose judgment is perverted by wrath, who coveteth sovereignty, who is foolish and who is deprived of reason by anger."<sup>6</sup> Sanjaya, gives him a befitting reply, when he points out that, it was Dhritharashtra, who slipped from the duties as a good parent towards Duryodhana and as a good ruler against the Pandavas. He also points out that, Duryodhana and his supporters were valiantly fighting the Pandavas, standing by their decision when Dhritharashtra was trying to seek comfort in blaming others, when he himself was the root cause of the carnage. He admonishes Dhritharashtra, "If, again, doing, thy duty as a father, thou hadst, by placing Duryodhana in the path of righteousness, caused him to tread along it, then this calamity would never have overtaken thee. ... Now, O King, when the battle has begun, thou censurest thy sons indicating diverse faults of theirs. This is scarcely becoming."<sup>7</sup> Opportunistic and selfish, Dhritharashtra can never be trusted, whereas, Duryodhana always stood by his supporters and friends.

Dhritharashtra, is a complex personality, with varying emotions and thoughts crisscrossing his troubled mind. He knows that, the Pandavas' claim to the kingdom was just, and wanted to give them the same, yet he cannot resist himself from wanting Duryodhana, to inherit the throne. Though, he strives to follow the path of Dharma and take Vidura's advice time and again, he allows himself to be swayed by Duryodhana's arguments and give into his demands. He tries to convince Duryodhana, to maintain peace with the Pandavas, yet he himself promotes enmity, by supporting Duryodhana in all his schemes, against the Pandavas. Till the end, he remains confused and a troubled soul, who is caught between the desire to be just and his love for his son. He is a perfect example, of how difficult it is to control one's emotions, in spite of knowing the consequences.

Analyzing his character, against the theory of emotional intelligence, one sees in him, the qualities of emotional perception, facilitation of thought, emotional understanding and management are all rolled into one. It is difficult to demarcate these qualities, or realize where one ends and the other begins. His emotional perception leads him to facilitation, understanding and management of emotions. His innermost, cherished desire was to see his own son crowned the king of Hastinapur. But, he knows that, this is an unjust wish (emotional perception), realizes that nobody – Bhishma, Drona, Kripa or Vidura would appreciate it (emotional perception again), hides his true intentions and speaks in favour of the Pandavas (emotional management and emotional facilitation of thought). He is also the first person, to realize when things go out of hand (eg. after Draupadi's swayamvara, he realizes that the Pandavas are equally powerful and thus tries to pacify them by giving half the kingdom) and takes immediate steps to bring the situation back in control (emotional understanding). Thus, it can be seen that, his emotional intelligence skills are quite commendable. There are numerous instances which give us a clear insight, into his emotional intelligence skills, but the episodes of sending the Pandavas to Varnavata and the game of dice are two prominent instances, where Dhritharashtra's emotional intelligence comes to the forefront. The following section will discuss in detail, his emotional intelligence skills, as proposed by the 'ability model'.

#### **Analysis of Dhritharashtra's Character against the Ability Model of 'Emotional Intelligence'**

Similar to that of Duryodhana's character analysis, Dhritharashtra's character is also analyzed against emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thought, first, and then against his skills of emotional understanding and emotional management.

#### **EMOTIONAL PERCEPTION AND EMOTIONAL FACILITATION OF THOUGHT**

Though, already mentioned in the previous chapter, it would not be amiss to refresh the reader, with what is emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thought. According to Mayer and Salovey, these first two levels of emotional intelligence skills, stand for an awareness or knowledge of one's own and others' emotional states, and the use of this information to sharpen one's thought processes. Even a superfluous reading of the Mahabharata, will tell the reader that, Dhritharashtra was quite strong in these two traits.

Dhritharashtra's greatest weakness was his unreasonable love for his son Duryodhana, which would take him to any extremes, inspite of knowing the terrible consequences. For the best part of the entire happenings, he tries to conceal this weakness, behind the excuse that, Duryodhana never heeded his advice. The only instance when he openly acknowledges this failing in him is, when the two sides – Pandavas and Kauravas – are readying for the Kurukshetra war. Troubled by his son's adamancy, anxious over Pandavas' supremacy in military skills, wavered by his own desire to see his son Duryodhana victorious, as usual, he summons Vidura to counsel and advise him, on the path of righteousness and 'Dharma'. Vidura's discourse on the moralities of common men and that of the kings, runs to eight chapters which is known as 'Vidura Neethi'. But unfortunately, this elaborate discourse remains futile, as Dhritharashtra's mind remains fettered to his weakness. He admits with a sigh, "Although, however, I incline in my mind towards the Pandavas even as thou teachest me to do, yet as soon as I come in contact with Duryodhana it turneth off in a different way."<sup>8</sup> As Dhritharashtra himself acknowledges, this was his greatest flaw. What makes interesting reading is, how he deals with it. The complexity of Dhritharashtra's character lies in the fact that, he was aware of his emotions, he is also aware that, they

were pulling him towards the path of destruction, he was aware of the right path, he had people like Vidura who strongly canvassed against the viciousness of his acts yet, and he chooses the path to destruction. This opens up a new avenue that, a mere awareness of emotional state does not help him or propel him, towards managing them.

Duryodhana's awareness of his emotional state, propelled him to justify himself to others. He was convinced and strived to convince others that, his jealousy towards the Pandavas was befitting a king, who should constantly strive to eliminate his enemies. But, Dhritharashtra's awareness leads him to hide his emotions, as it is chained with the knowledge that, his emotions are not just or virtuous. As proposed by Mayer and Salovey, awareness does lead to emotional facilitation of thought, but at different levels. If Duryodhana seeks to justify and convince others, Dhritharashtra strives to conceal his emotions.

The first instance, one comes into contact with Dhritharashtra's double standards is when, he summons Kanika (his minister) and seeks his advice on the ways/means, to tackle the Pandavas' rising popularity. The ensuing discourse is a hair raising, terrible and a ruthless set of directions, which strive to annihilate the enemy, without the least mercy. Dhritharashtra chooses Kanika's advice against Vidura's, and encourages Duryodhana as he plans to kill the Pandavas at Varanavata. At the same time, he advises them to exercise caution, so that, the plan is executed with perfection without bringing the blame at their doorstep, that he was adept in understanding the emotions of others and their expected responses is evident from his handling of this situation. He raises several questions, on how citizens of Hastinapur and the Kuru elders would respond to this heinous act. Only after ascertaining, that Duryodhana had thought about all these eventualities, does he give his nod to the plot. Even then, he exercises extreme caution. On one hand, he encourages Duryodhana to win over the people of Hastinapur, with grants of wealth and honours, and on the other hand subtly arouses the curiosity of the Pandavas, to visit Varanavata by instructing his councilors to describe the beauty and charm of the city and its festivities. Once, he ascertains that, the curiosity of the Pandavas is awakened; he invites them to visit Varanavata. The whole episode is orchestrated with extreme care and caution. The Pandavas spend a full one year, before Purochana (Duryodhana's accomplice) is given instructions to set the palace on fire. But the ever cautious Pandavas beat the Kauravas, at their own game, by setting fire to the palace themselves and escaping to a village near Drupada's kingdom, the Ekachakrapura, through the tunnel they had dug. The citizens of Hastinapur are shocked and are inconsolable over Pandavas' death. Dhritharashtra is relieved at the news of Pandavas' death in the fire, but outwardly laments and weeps in great sorrow. He orders for the funeral rites to be performed and he himself offers oblations, all the while grieving for the princes.

The second instance, where his skills of emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thought come to the forefront is, when Vidura arrives with the news of Draupadi's swayamvara. As Vidura announces, "The Kurus are prospering by good luck!"<sup>9</sup>, Dhritharashtra mistakenly understands it to be Duryodhana's victory and orders for an elaborate welcome, for the bride and the groom. As Vidura clarifies that, it was the Pandavas and not Duryodhana who had won the hand of Draupadi, as ever, he quickly masks his disappointment and claims, "Those children are to me as dear as they were to Pandu. Nay, more."<sup>10</sup> Once Vidura leaves the scene, he pacifies Duryodhana who is not so happy, at the turn of events. He replies to Duryodhana's lament, that they have to protect themselves from the Pandavas saying, "I desire to

do exactly what you would recommend. But I do not wish to inform Vidura about it even by a change of muscle. It was, therefore, O son, that I was applauding the Pandavas in Vidura's presence, so that he might not know even by a sign what is in my mind. Now that Vidura hath gone away, this is the time, O Suyodhana (Duryodhana), for telling me what thou hast hit upon, and what, O Radheya (Karna), thou too hasty hit upon."<sup>11</sup>

It is seen here that, Dhritharashtra's emotional perceptual skills are quite sharp, as he is aware of his own emotions, understands how it would be received by the others, what others opine about him and takes precaution to hide his true feelings towards the Pandavas. This is, in stark contrast to Duryodhana's approach, as he tries to manipulate and convince others that, he was justified in his enmity towards Pandavas. With those who do not approve of him, he does not choose to mask his feelings, but to openly declare his intentions. This is because of two things – he is not worried about what the Kuru elders might think of him, and he is convinced that, his enmity towards the Pandavas was a just one. But Dhritharashtra is worried about his disrepute amongst the citizens of Hastinapur, and the elders in his court. Moreover, he realizes that, his actions are not just. Thus, he strives to hide his true emotions and pretends to treat the Pandavas and the Kauravas, without any difference.

Howard Gardner (2011), in his *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, wrote, "The less a person understands his own feelings, the more he will fall prey to them. The less a person understands the feelings, the responses, and the behavior of others, the more likely he will interact inappropriately with them and therefore fail to secure his proper place in the world." But, what one sees here is that, inspite of understanding his own and others' emotions, Dhritharashtra falls prey to his emotions. He lives a tormented life, unable to do justice to the Pandavas on one hand, and on the other is never able to reconcile to his own sinfulness. This trait reveals another dimension of emotional intelligence, where the individual struggles to make both ends meet. It also tells us that, a mere awareness does not help in managing emotions. This opens up an interesting and promising avenue of study. It may be considered and studied separately, by the theorists and researchers so that, it sheds more light on the responses of the human mind, to emotional challenges.

Having ascertained Dhritharashtra's skills, in the first two levels of emotional intelligence, as proposed by Mayer and Salovey, the next section will discuss his expertise in the other two levels, namely emotional understanding and emotional management.

## **EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT**

Emotional understanding, is the ability to identify the different complex emotions and also ascertain where one emotion slides on to another – e.g. Duryodhana's jealousy for the Pandavas, which leads to hatred. Here too, Dhritharashtra exhibits exemplary skills, in identifying the complex emotions that were crisscrossing his mind. As mentioned earlier, he was completely aware of both his sense of duty and justice, towards the Pandavas and also his love for Duryodhana and the desire that, Duryodhana should inherit the throne of Hastinapur. Till the end, he oscillates between these two strong emotions, unable to compromise with neither of them. One hears him acknowledge this dilemma of his, in his own words. When Duryodhana proposes the game of dice, to covet the wealth of the Pandavas and defeat them, he is tempted to go by Duryodhana's plans, but is also worried about the injustice and callousness of such an act. He tries to convince Duryodhana, (though half-heartedly, because the prospect of winning the entire kingdom without having to face

the powerful Pandavas in the battle field was too good resist), but, at the end realizes that, his mind as usual was tilting towards Duryodhana, and laying the blame on fate gives in to Duryodhana's heinous plan. He knows only too well that, try as he might, he cannot overcome his desire to see his own son, the sovereign ruler of Hastinapur. He orders Vidura to invite Yudhishtira, for the game of dice saying, "If fate be not hostile, this quarrel will not certainly grieve me. The whole universe moveth at the will of its Creator, under the controlling influence of Fate. It is not free. Therefore, O Vidura, going unto King Yudhishtira at my command, brings thou soon that invincible son of Kunti."<sup>12</sup>

Dhritharashtra openly acknowledges this dilemma of his, as he confides in Vidura, "Although, however, I incline in my mind towards the Pandavas, even as thou teachest me to do, yet as soon as I come in contact with Duryodhana, it turneth off in a different way."<sup>13</sup> This very clearly tells us that, Dhritharashtra was not only aware of the different emotions tearing him apart, but also the fact that, he was not able to control himself, where his son was involved. Even as his awareness of his emotional state does not help him in controlling himself, his understanding of complex emotions also does not help him in regulating his emotions. This again throws open an interesting debate, whether awareness or knowledge of emotions alone is sufficient, or is there a missing link between awareness and regulation of emotions.

Dhritharashtra's skill at judging others' shift of emotions, is evident in two instances – one after Draupadi's swayamvara, when he gives half the kingdom to the Pandavas, and the other after the game of dice, when he realizes that, his son had crossed the bounds in antagonizing the Pandavas and thereby, earning the wrath of the Kuru elders and also the subjects of Hastinapur. Unlike Duryodhana, he retreats when the tide is against him, or when he realizes that, his plans are not yielding the desired results. Immediately, after Draupadi's swayamvara, Duryodhana, along with Karna, Sakuni and Dussasana, invade the kingdom of Drupada (Draupadi's father) and declare war against the Pandavas. But, the valiant Arjuna defies their advances and emerges triumphant. The defeated Kauravas return empty handed. Dhritharashtra, who is eagerly awaiting the news of his son's victory, leaps in jublance, when Vidura announces that, the Kurus have emerged victorious. He thinks that, Vidura was referring to Duryodhana and his brothers, when he says 'Kurus'. As Vidura clarifies that, it was indeed the Pandavas who had won Draupadi's hand, Dhritharashtra quickly changes tactics and orders, for an elaborate welcome for the victorious Pandavas.

His emotional understanding skills come to the forefront, as he exercises caution in taking the next step. Even as Duryodhana still wants to find means of causing dissension, between the Pandavas and defeating them, Dhritharashtra understands that, at that juncture, it was best to lie low and wait for the opportune time. He also understands that, the Pandavas had the military support of Drupada. Close to the heels of an unsuccessful campaign, the Kuru elders too would not be in a mood to tolerate any further disturbance, to the Pandavas. The general public too was in an upbeat mood, over Pandavas' escape from the fire in Varanavata and returning with Draupadi, as their bride. Last, but not the least, he also understands that, the Pandavas with their new gained support of Drupada, would not tolerate any constraints against them. The Pandavas were definitely not the same as before, who would suffer in silence. Assessing the situation, he makes peace with the Pandavas and taking the approval of the elders, hands over half the kingdom to Yudhishtira.

From this episode, one can ascertain that, his emotional understanding skills were quite commendable. He is accurate in judging the Pandavas', shift of mood from silent sufferers to strong defenders of their rights, and thus,



immediately takes steps to repair the damage. Handing over half the kingdom is a masterly move, because Dhritharashtra was aware that, the Pandavas with their extraordinary military skills combined with the support of Drupada and his allies would be formidable foes, in the eventuality of a war, which would end victorious to the Pandavas. The Kauravas then would have lost their entire kingdom and be at the mercy of the Pandavas. By dividing the kingdom into half, he averts an inevitable clash (at least for the time being) and also saves himself from disrepute. He, in his inimitable style, hands over half the kingdom to Yudhishtira, saying, "Repair ye to Khandavaprastha so that no difference may arise again (between you and your cousins). If you take up your quarters there, no one will be able to do you any injury. Protected by Partha (Arjuna), like the celestials by the thunderbolt, reside ye at Khandavaprastha, taking half of the kingdom."<sup>14</sup> Here again, the hidden agenda is that, the area given to the Pandavas was dry, arid and infertile land. At the pretence of giving away half the kingdom, he still retains the best part for himself. Comparing this to Duryodhana's adamancy, in refusing even five villages to the Pandavas, after they come back from their thirteen years of exile, one identifies a master schemer and the seasoned politician, in Dhritharashtra.

Duryodhana's strong emotions, against the Pandavas blinded him to any favourable prospects for him, whereas, Dhritharashtra still retains a level headedness, in getting the best out of even adverse situations. His conduct, at the game of dice is yet another proof of this trait in him. The game of dice, plays a crucial role in ascertaining the emotional intelligence skills, of both Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra. While Duryodhana succumbs to his strong emotions, Dhritharashtra clearly emerges a winner as he handles it with poise. This incident brings out the best of Dhritharashtra's emotional intelligence skills – be it perception, or understanding, or management of emotions. His green signal to the game of dice, is not a whimsical decision, as he sees prospects of a victory without the risk of going for a war. Also, victory or defeat in a war can never be predicted for either side. But, at the game of dice, he sees a sure opportunity in defeating the Pandavas, as he knows that Yudhishtira was no match to Sakuni's expertise and craftiness, in rolling the dice. He makes superfluous attempts, to convince Duryodhana to give up this disgraceful plan, puts the blame on fate and commands Vidura to invite Yudhishtira, for the ill fated game. The glee is unmistakable, as Yudhishtira keeps losing all his stakes, one by one. He repeatedly asks, with uncontrollable eagerness, 'Hath the stake been won?' 'Hath the stake been won?'<sup>15</sup> He cannot conceal his emotions, as Yudhishtira loses everything including himself, his brothers and shamefully, his wife Draupadi as well. From here one sees Duryodhana's breaking all fetters and giving free vent to his hitherto controlled emotions. Goaded by his friends, he commits the most inhuman acts of disrobing his brothers' wife, in the open court, and taunting her to abandon her worthless husbands. In contrast is Dhritharashtra's silence, as he neither stops Duryodhana, nor supports him. He senses the upheaval as Vidura and Vikarna (Dhritharashtra's son) sternly condemn Duryodhana's acts, and the court is divided in its views, whether Yudhishtira was to be blamed for Draupadi's plight or Duryodhana. Dhritharashtra, quietly watches the drama unfold and allows it to go as far as it could. He expects Duryodhana to emerge victorious, which eventually does happen, but at a great cost. Pushed to the extreme, Bhima takes a terrible oath to drink the blood of Dussasana (Duryodhana's brother who disrobes Draupadi) and break Duryodhana's thigh (which he reveals tauntingly at Draupadi), at the battle. It is only at this juncture, that Dhritharashtra intervenes. Sensing that, things have gone too far, he attempts to redeem what can be and condemns Duryodhana harshly, "Thou wicked minded Duryodhana,

thou wretch, destruction hath already overtaken thee when thou insultest in language such as this the wife of these bulls among the Kurus, especially their wedded wife Draupadi.”<sup>16</sup> He addresses Draupadi, in soothing tones, “Ask me of any boon, O princess of Panchala, that thou desirest, Chaste and devoted to virtue, thou art the first of all my daughters-in-law.” He, thereby proceeds to give back Yudhishtira all that he had lost, and speaks in conciliatory tones, “In thee is virtue, in Arjuna patience, in Bhimasena is prowess, and the twins, those foremost of me, is pure reverence for superiors. Blest be thou, O Ajatasatru. Return to Khandavaprastha, and let there be brotherly love between thee and thy cousins.”<sup>17</sup>

He is shrewd enough, to assess the shift of emotions in the Pandavas, from a sense of shame in staking their wife and losing her, to an intense urge to avenge the insults heaped on them. He also recognizes that, even those who would not question the game of dice, would never accept the public disrobing of a chaste woman. Besides, he is aware that the Pandavas always sought peace and harmony, at the same time, when provoked, were invincible foes who would crush their enemies to defeat. Apart from all these, the general mood of the subjects and the elders of the race were also against the Kauravas. Keeping all this in mind, Dhritharashtra quickly intervenes to make peace and gives back to Yudhishtira, all that had been lost. Thus, his emotional understanding skills save the day at least temporarily.

In all the above instances one can also identify his ability to manage his emotions. Be it after Draupadi's swayamvara or after the ill fated game of dice, he is the first to quickly recover. He exhibits a complete turnaround of emotions. One minute he is ecstatic over his son's supremacy over the Pandavas, the next he is reprimanding Duryodhana's rash actions and speaking in soothing tones to pacify the Pandavas. He displays that he can bring his emotions into control at any given time. He neither loses focus, nor his rationality as he juggles deftly between his obstinate son, the just Vidura, and of course the pragmatic Pandavas. In fact, throughout the epic, there is only one instance where he loses control over his emotions. After the Pandavas are defeated in the game of dice and sent in exile for thirteen years, the troubled Dhritharashtra as usual seeks to find comfort in Vidura's wise words. Vidura keeps pointing out to the foolhardiness of Dhritharashtra's support to Duryodhana. No longer able to contain himself, he bursts forth, “How can I abandon my son for the sake of the sons of Pandu? Doubtless they are my sons, but Duryodhana is sprung from my body. Who then, speaking with impartiality, will ever counsel me to renounce my own body for the sake of others? O Vidura, all that thou sayest is crooked, although I hold thee in high esteem. Stay or go as thou likest.”<sup>18</sup> This too is of course momentary as he repents his harsh words and sends word to bring back Vidura.

Throughout the analysis of Dhritharashtra's skills as an emotionally intelligent person, one finds that he was exceptionally well versed in the art of perceiving, understanding and managing his emotions. His knowledge of emotions assists him in accurately assessing the outcomes of any situation. But, the saddest part is that in spite of his knowledge, he takes a path which leads to the destruction of the entire Kuru race. He has none but himself to blame as he loses all his hundred sons and leads a miserable life at Hastinapur ruled by the Pandavas. More than his sons' loss, the thought that he was the cause of all this fruitless carnage torments him and he does not find a moments' peace. If earlier he suffered as he could not help supporting Duryodhana in all his unjust schemes, later, it was an added torment that he had to bear the blame of allowing the destruction.

## FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

Does Dhritharashtra's emotional intelligence skills help him manage stress, and assist him in problem solving? Hardly ever, as it is seen very clearly that, he remains a tormented soul throughout his life. His awareness of his emotional states does neither comfort, nor help him overcome his shortcomings. The guilt of not doing justice to the Pandavas, combined with the shame of allowing Duryodhana resort to unfair means, in coveting the kingdom keeps the wounds afresh. Dhritharashtra, is like a caged animal, which struggles to break the fetters, but finds locking itself stronger into the cage.

So, to draw the inferences, one can safely claim that, Dhritharashtra's emotional intelligence skills do not assist him to lead a stress free, peaceful life. Moreover, it can be noted that, Dhritharashtra fails to earn any appreciation for his intelligence, as it is directed towards a destructive path, which ultimately leads everyone to ruin and misery. This strengthens the fact that, emotional intelligence skills can be used negatively, and unless there is a clear warning, the concept of emotional intelligence can be misused.

## CONCLUSIONS

Emotional Intelligence can be manipulated and used negatively, as is seen in the case of Dhritharashtra, who is fully aware of his and others' emotional states and exploits it to the fullest extent. His support to Duryodhana is also an exploitation of Duryodhana's jealousy, for achieving his own intention – retaining the throne of Hastinapur for himself and his sons. There can be no half measures, in being emotionally intelligent. Dhritharashtra does show promising potential, for emotional intelligence, but fail to capitalize as he is defined by his penchant, for strong emotions – good or bad. Thus, we see that, Emotional Intelligence remains a double edged sword, gaining significance according to the person who uses it.

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